



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. PF17-6-000]

Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC; Notice of Intent to Prepare an
Environmental Assessment For The Planned **Buckeye Xpress Project**; Request For
Comments on Environmental Issues, And Notice of Public Scoping Sessions

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will discuss the environmental impacts of the planned Buckeye Xpress Project (Buckeye Project) involving construction and operation of facilities by Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC (Columbia) in Vinton, Jackson, Gallia, and Lawrence Counties, Ohio. The Commission will use this EA in its decision-making process to determine whether the project is in the public convenience and necessity.

This notice announces the opening of the scoping process the Commission will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies on the Project. You can make a difference by providing us with your specific comments or concerns about the Project. Your comments should focus on the potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. Your input will help the Commission staff determine what issues they need to evaluate in the EA. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please send your comments so that the Commission receives them in Washington, DC on or before **November 16, 2017**.

If you sent comments on this Project to the Commission **before** the opening of this docket on August 1, 2017, you will need to file those comments in Docket No. PF17-6-000 to ensure they are considered as part of this proceeding. This notice is being sent to the Commission's current environmental mailing list for this project. State and local government representatives should notify their constituents of this planned Project and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, a pipeline company representative may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the planned facilities. The company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement. However, if the Commission approves the project, that approval conveys with it the right of eminent domain. Therefore, if easement negotiations fail to produce

an agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings where compensation would be determined in accordance with state law.

A fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled *An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?* is available for viewing on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov). This fact sheet addresses a number of typically asked questions, including the use of eminent domain and how to participate in the Commission's proceedings.

Public Participation

For your convenience, there are four methods you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. The Commission will provide equal consideration to all comments received, whether filed in written form or provided verbally. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has expert staff available to assist you at (202) 502-8258 or FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov. Please carefully follow these instructions so that your comments are properly recorded.

- 1) You can file your comments electronically using the [eComment](#) feature on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). This is an easy method for submitting brief, text-only comments on a project;
- 2) You can file your comments electronically by using the [eFiling](#) feature on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). With eFiling, you can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on [eRegister](#). If you are filing a comment on a particular project, please select "Comment on a Filing" as the filing type;
- 3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the following address. Be sure to reference the project docket number (PF17-6-000) with your submission:

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE, Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426; or

- 4) In lieu of sending written or electronic comments, the Commission invites you to attend one of the public scoping sessions its staff will conduct in the

project area, scheduled as follows:

Date and Time	Location
Tuesday, October 24, 2017 4:30 – 7:30 pm	Ironton High School 1701 South 7 th Street Ironton, Ohio 45638 740-532-3911
Wednesday, October 25, 2017 4:30 – 7:30 pm	Jackson High School 500 Vaughn Street Jackson, Ohio 45640 740-286-7575

The primary goal of these scoping sessions is to have you identify the specific environmental issues and concerns that should be considered in the EA to be prepared for this project. Individual verbal comments will be taken on a one-on-one basis with a court reporter. This format is designed to receive the maximum amount of verbal comments, in a convenient way during the timeframe allotted.

Each scoping session is scheduled from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm Eastern time. You may arrive at any time after 4:30 pm. There will not be a formal presentation by Commission staff when the session opens. If you wish to speak, the Commission staff will hand out numbers in the order of your arrival. Comments will be taken until 6:30 pm. However, if no additional numbers have been handed out and all individuals who wish to provide comments have had an opportunity to do so, staff may conclude the session at 7:00 pm. Please see appendix 1 for additional information on the session format and conduct.¹

Your scoping comments will be recorded by the court reporter (with FERC staff or representative present) and become part of the public record for this proceeding. Transcripts will be publicly available on FERC's eLibrary

¹ The appendices referenced in this notice will not appear in the Federal Register. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail and are available at www.ferc.gov using the link called "eLibrary" or from the Commission's Public Reference Room, 888 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20426, or call (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

system (see below for instructions on using eLibrary). If a significant number of people are interested in providing verbal comments in the one-on-one settings, a time limit of 5 minutes may be implemented for each commentor.

It is important to note that verbal comments hold the same weight as written or electronically submitted comments. Although there will not be a formal presentation, Commission staff will be available throughout the comment session to answer your questions about the environmental review process. Representatives from Columbia will also be present to answer project-specific questions.

Summary of the Planned Project

Columbia plans to replace Columbia's aging system with newer and more reliable pipeline facilities in Vinton, Jackson, Gallia, and Lawrence Counties, Ohio. The Project would provide about 275,000 dekatherms per day of additional firm natural gas transportation capacity. According to Columbia, its project would ensure reliability and flexibility for its firm storage and storage transportation services on a system-wide basis.

The Buckeye Project would consist of the following facilities:

- install 65.7 miles of new, 36-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline and various associated facilities including two tie-ins, four new MLVs, suction and discharge lines to the Oak Hill Compressor Station, and installation of over-pressure protection at five locations (planned R-801 system);
- abandon 58.8 miles of existing 20-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline and associated facilities (R-501 system); and
- abandon 2.0 miles of existing 20-inch-diameter and 24-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline and associated facilities (R-500 system).

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 2.

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the planned R-801 facilities would disturb about 1,220 acres of land for the aboveground facilities and the pipeline. Abandonment of the existing R-500 and R-501 systems would affect about 979 acres. Following construction, Columbia would maintain about 402 acres for permanent operation of the project's new R-801 facilities; the remaining acreage would be restored and revert to former uses. About 80 percent of the planned pipeline route would parallel existing pipeline, utility, or road rights-of-way.

The EA Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. NEPA also requires us² to discover and address concerns the public may have about proposals. This process is referred to as scoping. The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis in the EA on the important environmental issues. By this notice, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of the issues to address in the EA. We will consider all filed comments during the preparation of the EA.

In the EA we will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the planned project under these general headings:

- geology and soils;
- land use;
- water resources, fisheries, and wetlands;
- cultural resources;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- air quality and noise;
- endangered and threatened species;
- public safety; and
- cumulative impacts.

We will also evaluate possible alternatives to the planned Project or portions of the Project, and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas.

Although no formal application has been filed, we have already initiated our NEPA review under the Commission's pre-filing process. The purpose of the pre-filing process is to encourage early involvement of interested stakeholders and to identify and resolve issues before the FERC receives an application. As part of our pre-filing review, we have begun to contact some federal and state agencies to discuss their involvement in the scoping process and the preparation of the EA.

The EA will present our independent analysis of the issues. The EA will be available in the public record through eLibrary. Depending on the comments received during the scoping process, we may also publish and distribute the EA to the public for an allotted comment period. We will consider all comments on the EA before we make

² We, us, and our refer to the environmental staff of the Commission's Office of Energy Projects.

our recommendations to the Commission. To ensure we have the opportunity to consider and address your comments, please carefully follow the instructions in the Public Participation section, beginning on page 2.

With this notice, we are asking agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues related to this project to formally cooperate with us in the preparation of the EA.³ Agencies that would like to request cooperating agency status should follow the instructions for filing comments provided under the Public Participation section of this notice. Currently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has expressed its intention to participate as a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EA to satisfy its NEPA responsibilities related to this project.

Consultations Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's implementing regulations for section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we are using this notice to initiate consultation with the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and to solicit their views and those of other government agencies, interested Indian tribes, and the public on the project's potential effects on historic properties.⁴ We will define the project-specific Area of Potential Effects (APE) in consultation with the SHPO as the project develops. On natural gas facility projects, the APE at a minimum encompasses all areas subject to ground disturbance (examples include construction right-of-way, contractor/pipe storage yards, compressor stations, and access roads). Our EA for this project will document our findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under section 106.

Currently Identified Environmental Issues

We have already identified several issues that we think deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the planned facilities and the environmental information provided by Columbia. This preliminary list of issues may change based on your comments and our analysis and includes:

- agriculture and prime farmland;
- water resources;
- crossing of the Wayne National Forest;
- endangered species; and

³ The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating agency responsibilities are at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1501.6.

⁴ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800. Those regulations define historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

- steep terrain.

Environmental Mailing List

The environmental mailing list includes federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American Tribes; other interested parties; and local libraries and newspapers. This list also includes all affected landowners (as defined in the Commission's regulations) who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for project purposes, or who own homes within certain distances of aboveground facilities, and anyone who submits comments on the project. We will update the environmental mailing list as the analysis proceeds to ensure that we send the information related to this environmental review to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the planned project.

If we publish and distribute the EA, copies of the EA will be sent to the environmental mailing list for public review and comment. **If you would prefer to receive a paper copy of the document instead of the CD version or would like to remove your name from the mailing list, please return the attached Information Request (appendix 3).**

Becoming an Intervenor

Once Columbia files its application with the Commission, you may want to become an "intervenor" which is an official party to the Commission's proceeding. Intervenor play a more formal role in the process and are able to file briefs, appear at hearings, and be heard by the courts if they choose to appeal the Commission's final ruling. An intervenor formally participates in the proceeding by filing a request to intervene. Motions to intervene are more fully described at <http://www.ferc.gov/resources/guides/how-to/intervene.asp>. Instructions for becoming an intervenor are in the Document-less Intervention Guide under the e-filing link on the Commission's website. Please note that the Commission will not accept requests for intervenor status at this time. You must wait until the Commission receives a formal application for the project.

Additional Information

Additional information about the project is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs, at **(866) 208-FERC**, or on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov) using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on "General Search" and enter the docket number, excluding the last three digits in the Docket Number field (i.e., PF17-6). Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or

for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

In addition, the Commission offers a free service called eSubscription which allows you to keep track of all formal issuances and submittals in specific dockets. This can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings by automatically providing you with notification of these filings, document summaries, and direct links to the documents. Go to www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp.

Finally, public sessions or site visits will be posted on the Commission's calendar located at www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx along with other related information.

Dated: October 16, 2017.

Kimberly D. Bose,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 2017-22917 Filed: 10/20/2017 8:45 am; Publication Date: 10/23/2017]